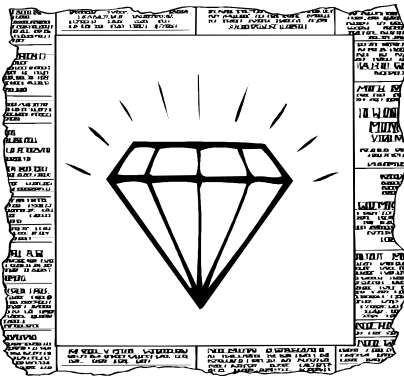


Facts for Business

In the Loupe: Advertising Diamonds, Gemstones and Pearls



Federal Trade Commission
Bureau of Consumer Protection
Office of Consumer & Business Education
1-877-FTC-HELP www.ftc.gov

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If you advertise or sell jewelry, your product claims must be accurate. The Federal Trade Commission acts in the interest of all consumers to prevent deceptive and unfair acts or practices. The Commission's Jewelry Guides explain how to describe jewelry products truthfully and non-deceptively. This brochure addresses marketing claims about diamonds, gemstones and pearls. Sellers may need to focus particular attention to make sure that descriptions about these products are not misleading and that important, material information is disclosed to consumers.

Diamond Weight

Decimal Representations

If the diamond's weight is described in decimal parts of a carat, the figure should be accurate to the last decimal place. For example, ".30 carat" could represent a diamond that weighs between .295 - .304 carat. If the weight is given to only one decimal place, it should be accurate to the second decimal place. That is, if you say a diamond weighs .5 carat, the diamond should weigh between .495 - .504 carat.

Fractional Representations

If the diamond's weight is described in fractions, the fraction may represent a range of weights. For example, a diamond described as $\frac{1}{2}$ carat could weigh between .47 - .54 carat. If you use this method, you

should disclose two things: the fact that the diamond weight is not exact and the reasonable range of weight for each fraction or the weight tolerance being used.

Disclosures in Catalogs, Printed Materials and Online Ads

If you make fractional representations of diamond weight in catalogs or other printed materials, you should disclose—clearly and conspicuously on every page with the representation—that the diamond weight is not exact. You can give the range of weights for each fraction or the tolerances used on a separate page of the catalog or materials, as long as you state, on every page that includes a fractional representation, where the consumer can find the information. For example, your catalog may say *"Diamond weights are not exact. See the chart on page x for weight ranges."*

Diamond Testers and Moissanite

Thermal testers used to distinguish diamonds from cubic zirconia may not accurately identify lab-created moissanite—a gemstone that resembles a diamond. Because this laboratory-created stone may falsely register as a diamond on your thermal detector, you should ensure that you recognize moissanite for what it is. For example, newer testers can do this or you may need to learn other ways of distinguishing moissanite from diamonds.

Gemstone Treatments

Gemstone treatments or enhancements refer to the way some gems are altered or treated to improve their appearance or durability. Some common treatments and their effects include:

- **Heating** can lighten, darken or change the color of some gems, or improve a gemstone's clarity.
- **Irradiation** can add more color to colored diamonds, certain other gemstones and pearls.
- **Impregnating** some gems with colorless oils, wax or resins makes a variety of imperfections less visible and can improve the gemstones' clarity and appearance.
- **Fracture filling** hides cracks or fractures in gems by injecting colorless plastic or glass into the cracks and improves the gemstones' appearance and durability.
- **Diffusion treatment** adds color to the surface of colorless gems; the center of the stone remains colorless.
- **Dyeing** adds color and improves color uniformity in some gemstones and pearls.
- **Bleaching** lightens and whitens some gems, including jade and pearls.

The Jewelry Guides advise that when a gemstone has been treated and the treatment is not permanent, you tell consumers this information. Also, if a treated stone requires special care, you should inform consumers that the gemstone has been treated and give consumers instructions for care of the stone. Providing consumers with information about

other treatments that do not fall into one of these two categories generally makes good business sense.

The following are examples of disclosures that are suggested by the Guides. If the color of a treated gemstone will fade over time, you should tell the consumer that the gemstone has been treated, the treatment is not permanent and the stone's color will fade over time. If ultrasonic cleaners or solvents should not be used to care for a treated stone, you should tell the consumer that the gemstone has been treated and which cleaners or solvents should not be used to care for the stone.

You should disclose information about treatments at the point of sale and in any print advertisement, mail order catalog, televised shopping program and online advertisement where the treated gemstone may be purchased without the consumer seeing the actual item.

Pearls

You should tell consumers if the pearls that you are selling are cultured or imitation. Your ads should not use the word “pearl”—by itself—unless the advertised product consists only of **natural pearls**. If the product contains **cultured pearls**, the word “cultured,” “cultivated,” or another word or phrase with the same meaning should immediately precede the word pearl. A statement that discloses only the type of

cultured pearl you are selling—for example, freshwater, South Sea, or Akoya pearls—does not comply with this requirement. You should say instead that the pearls are cultured—for example, cultured freshwater pearls, South Sea cultured pearls, Akoya cultured pearls. If the product contains **imitation pearls**, the word “artificial,” “imitation,” “simulated,” or another word or phrase with the same meaning should immediately precede the word pearl.

Some black, bronze, gold, purple, blue and orange pearls, whether natural or cultured, occur that way in nature; some, however, are dyed through various processes. You should tell consumers whether the colored pearls are naturally colored, dyed or irradiated.

For More Information

To learn more about making accurate representations of diamonds, gemstones, pearls and other jewelry products, including gold, silver and platinum, ask for a free copy of the FTC's Guides for the Jewelry, Precious Metals and Pewter Industries. Contact the Consumer Response Center by phone: toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357); TDD: 202-326-2502, by mail: Consumer Response Center, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580, or at www.ftc.gov on the Web.